

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION NATO

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMCONSUL OPORTO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4736

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

MADRID ALSO FOR AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, PO, XF

SUBJ: EXPRESSO EDITORIAL ON "PORTUGAL, THE ARABS AND THE
AMERICANS

SUMMARY: EXPRESSO EDITORIAL, WRITTEN AT SUGGESTION OF PRESI-
DENT'S OFFICE, DISCUSSES RECENT GOP "ARAB OFFENSIVE" AND SUGGESTS
LAJES AIR BASE MAY BE MEANS WHEREBY PROTUGUESE CAN ATTRACT
ARAB INVESTMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. EDITORIAL IN NOVEMBER 1 EDITION OF LIBERAL WEEKLY EXPRESSO
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TITLED "PORTUGAL, THE ARABS AND THE AMERICANS" BEGINS BY

CITING THREE EXAMPLES OF WHAT PAPER TERMS RECENT "ARAB OFFENSIVE" ON PART OF GOP: REFERENCES TO ARABS AND NEED FOR CLOSER TIES WITH THEM BY PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES IN HIS RECENT ADDRESS BEFORE UNGA; DISPATCH OF SECRETARY GENERAL OF FOREIGN MINISTRY TO RABAT A FEW DAYS AGO TO DELIVER PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO ASSEMBLED ARAB CHIEFS CALLING FOR URGENT ARAB-LUSO RAPPROACHMENT; UPCOMING VISIT BY FOREIGN MINISTER SOARES TO LIBYA AND TUNISIA, AND VISIT TO OTHER ARAB STATES BEING PLANNED BY MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO MELO ANTUNES.

2. EXPRESSO SAYS ON THE ONE HAND THIS "ARAB OFFENSIVE" SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS ABNORMAL SINCE PROGRAM OF ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT CALLS FOR ENLARGING AND DIVERSIFYING GOP'S FOREIGN RELATIONS, AND BECAUSE ON OTHER HAND SUPPLY OF ARAB OIL OF GREAT CONCERN TO EUROPEANS IN GENERAL.

3. EDITORIAL NOTES, HOWEVER, THAT THIS OFFENSIVE COMES AT TIME WHEN GOP AND USG NEGOTIATING OVER LAJES AIR BASE, AND JUST AFTER FORD-KISSINGER-COSTA GOMES MEETING IN WASHINGTON. VIEWED IN THIS LIGHT, ASKS EXPRESSO, DOES ARAB OFFENSIVE SIGNIFY ATTEMPT BY PORTUGAL TO LEAVE US ORBIT (WITHOUT, HOWEVER, BREAKING PREVIOUSLY AGREED UPON ACCORDS)? OR DOES IT MEAN SIMPLY THAT GOP SEEKING SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FROM OIL-RICH COUNTRIES?

4. ARTICLE NOTES THAT NON-ALIGNMENT HAS BEEN DISCREETLY DEFENDED IN SOME POLITICAL CIRCLES AND BY SOME IN ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT. REASONING IS THAT: THE NEW PORTUGUESE REGIME HAS NO REASONS TO BE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL TO THE AMERICANS; FURTHERMORE, PORTUGAL, BECAUSE OF ITS AFRICAN AND THIRD WORLD ROOTS, IS IDEALLY SUITED TO BE PIVOT POINT LINKING EUROPE WITH OTHER CONTINENTS; PORTUGAL'S SMALL GEOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC SIZE, AND HER INSIGNIFICANT DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT SERVE AS GUARANTEE THAT SHE WILL BE ANTI-IMPERIALIST; PORTUGAL'S INTERNAL SITUATION AND CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SITUATION ON INTERNATIONAL SCENE IMPLY HER NECESSITY TO MANIFEST A NON-DEPENDENCE ON THE US, ETC.

5. ARTICLE STATES THAT THE NON-ALIGNMENT THESIS WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MOST CONVENIENT ONE IN TERMS OF PROTECTION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS. HOWEVER, THE DIFFICULTIES IN PUTTING THIS THESIS INTO PRACTICE ARE UNDENIABLE. FIRST, BECAUSE THE AMERICANS WOULD NOT BE HAPPY WITH IT. (PORTUGAL IS EUROPEAN, IBERIAN, MEDITERRANEAN, AND, BECAUSE OF LAJES, IS LINKED TO THE NEAR AND FAR EAST, AS WELL AS TO ANGOLA.) SECONDLY, THERE IS THE ARAB POSTURE TO CONSIDER. LOOK HOW LONG IT IS TAKING THE ARAB OIL-PRODUCING NATIONS TO AID THEIR NON-OIL PRODUCING

BROTHERS. ONE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF ARAB MONEY IS DEPOSITED IN "SAFE" COUNTRIES LIKE GERMANY AND THE US, WHICH PROVES THAT IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN "OLD TIES WITH THE ARABS" TO INDUCE THEM TO INVEST OIL MONEY IN PORTUGAL.

6. THE INDUCEMENT, IT APPEARS, WILL BE THE LAJES BASE. THIS IS THE PORTUGUESE TRUMP CARD IN RELATION TO THE AMERICANS. IT IS PRINCIPAL--AND ONLY--THING THAT WILL ATTRACT THE ARABS. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW THIS TRUMP CARD CAN AND WILL BE USED ("WHEN ONE OF THE PLAYERS IS A SUPER POWER PRECAUTION IS INDISPENSABLE"). THE PORTUGUESE DELAY IN PRESENTING CONCRETE NEGOTIATING PROPOSALS IN THE ONGOING LAJES NEGOTIATIONS INDICATES THAT AN OPTION HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE (SIC). IF THIS IS SO, CONCLUDES EDITORIAL, THE COUNTRY URGENTLY NEEDS TO KNOW WHAT HAS BEEN DECIDED IN ITS NAME.

7. COMMENT: EXPRESSO ASSISTANT EDITOR MARCELO REBELO DE SOUSA CALLED EMBOFF'S ATTENTION TO EDITORIAL IN LUNCHEON MEETING NOV 1, NOTING THAT IT WAS WRITTEN BY EDITOR FRANCISCO BALSEMAO AT "SUGGESTION" OF PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES' OFFICE. REBELO DE SOUSA SAID HE UNDERSTANDS THAT PRESIDENT DOES NOT WISH TO ACCEPT ANY POSSIBLE ARAB AID IN RETURN FOR LAJES TRUMP CARD. EDITORIAL MEANT TO ALERT U.S. TO GOP POLICY OPTIONS, AND HOPEFULLY TO SPUR USG TO GRANT AID SO THAT ARAB MONEY CAN BE DISPENSED WITH.
SCOTT

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